

Chapter 1 - Gifted Education

A gifted program is a permanent curricular response to the needs of gifted [and talented] students that articulates with the basic core curriculum.

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Mission

The mission of gifted education is to maximize the potential of gifted and talented students by providing academic and artistic programs and services that match the unique characteristics and needs of these students.

Beliefs

Gifted and talented students have a right to an appropriate education, one grounded in the recognition of their individual differences and unique learning needs.

Gifted and talented students must be taught using a curriculum that is responsive to their individual strengths and their learning styles.

Curriculum for gifted and talented learners must be founded on South Carolina academic standards and must allow for both acceleration and enrichment.

The instructional environment for gifted and talented learners must encourage and nurture inquiry, flexibility, and critical and creative thinking.

Rationale

Gifted and talented students are those who are identified in grades 1–12 as demonstrating high performance ability or potential in academic and/or artistic areas and therefore require an educational program beyond that

normally provided by the general school program in order to achieve their potential. (*Regulation 43-220, Gifted and Talented*)

... no matter what the initial characteristics (or gifts) of the individuals, unless there is a long and intensive process of encouragement, nurturance, education, and training, the individuals will not attain extreme levels of capability (Bloom, 1985)¹

Gifted and talented students possess learning characteristics and needs that differ from those of their chronological peers: they typically learn faster, desire greater depth of content, and concentrate on tasks longer. They are more curious and prefer solving more complex problems than their chronological peers. These differences call for challenging educational opportunities in which gifted and talented students can learn with and from intellectual peers. Special programming and services are essential in order for gifted and talented students to maximize their potential. Accordingly, the South Carolina General Assembly has mandated that school districts provide modified programs to develop the unique talents of these students. (§59-29-170. Programs for talented students. Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, amended 1986).

Gifted and talented learners should be identified as soon as they enter school. Since advanced abilities may become evident at different times for different individuals, identification should be an ongoing process. Identification should be inclusive, with attention given to underrepresented populations of gifted and talented learners.

Great diversity exists within the population of gifted and talented learners with respect to areas of academic and artistic giftedness, degree of giftedness within those areas, qualities such as motivation and persistence, and level of performance in school subjects. Because of this diversity, school districts must employ consistent procedures and multiple measures for the identification of gifted and talented students. Placement in gifted and talented programming as a result of the identification process implies that a student has the potential to learn at an advanced level in one or more areas of the curriculum when the program services provided match the student's strength(s).

Given the diverse needs of gifted and talented students, programming must be flexible and responsive to the needs of particular learners at a given stage of development. Programming for the gifted and talented should include a variety of options, including early school entrance, acceleration, grade/subject skipping, in-depth work in selected areas of study, and opportunities for community-based learning such as mentorships. Teachers who work with these learners must be carefully selected and trained in gifted education.

¹Bloom, B. (1985). *Developing talent in young people*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Curriculum for gifted and talented learners must have rigor, depth, and complexity. Instructional services must be delivered in an environment that honors diversity in thinking, fosters inquiry, and engenders positive attitudes toward learning. Curriculum scope and sequence must be designed to ensure that all learning opportunities for gifted and talented students form a coherent program of studies not only in specific content areas but also in critical/creative thinking and research.

Assessment of student learning is essential for continued student growth. Assessment strategies for gifted and talented students must match the instructional approaches used in the curriculum and provide specific, constructive feedback about growth and areas for further development. Assessment strategies should allow students to demonstrate their ability to function as disciplinarians in the various academic and artistic areas would in daily life (authentic assessment).

In addition to differentiated programming, curriculum, and assessment, gifted and talented students require guidance and counseling services responsive to their unique needs. Defined services for meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented learners through differentiated guidance and counseling must be developed at the school and district level. These services should address issues especially pertinent to gifted populations, such as coping with being different, perfectionism, underachievement, and dealing with uneven abilities. While teachers may support the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students, professionals who are trained in guidance and counseling should be the principal provider of these services. In order for counselors to address these issues effectively, counselors should complete graduate work in the nature and needs of the gifted and talented and meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. Counselors must also assist with academic and career planning appropriate for the aspirations and goals of gifted and talented learners. Early access to scholarship information and opportunities is crucial for these students.

When an educational program does not provide the challenge that gifted and talented students need, they may experience motivational, behavioral, and other problems that put them at risk. Therefore, it is critical that administrators, teachers, and support personnel participate in regular, relevant professional development that supports their understanding the nature and needs of gifted and talented learners. Also, schools must form collaborative relationships with parents to ensure that educational services address the particular needs of gifted and talented learners. Our gifted and talented students are too important to let them be “left behind” or to “fall through the cracks” of the educational system.

Legislation Pertaining to State-Funded Gifted and Talented Program in South Carolina

§ 59-29-170. Programs for talented students. Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, Amended 1986

Not later than August 15, 1987, gifted and talented students at the elementary and secondary levels must be provided programs during the regular school year or during summer school to develop their unique talents in the manner the State Board of Education must specify and to the extent state funds are provided. The Select Committee shall study the implementation of this section and report its findings to the General Assembly by July 1, 1986. By August 15, 1984, the State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations establishing the criteria for student eligibility in Gifted and Talented Programs. The funds appropriated for Gifted and Talented Programs under the Education Improvement Act of 1984 must be allocated to the school districts of the State on the basis that the number of gifted and talented students served in each district bears to the total of all those students in the State. However, districts unable to identify more than forty students using the selection criteria established by regulations of the State Board of Education shall receive fifteen thousand dollars annually. Provided, further, school districts shall serve gifted and talented students according to the following order of priority: (1) grades 3–12 academically identified gifted and talented students not included in the state-funded Advanced Placement Program for eleventh and twelfth grade students; (2) after all students eligible under priority one are served, students in grades 3–12 identified in one of the following visual and performing arts areas: dance, drama, music, and visual arts must be served; and (3) after all students eligible under priorities one and two are served, students in grades 1 and 2 identified as academically or artistically gifted and talented must be served. All categories of students identified and served shall be funded at a weight of .30 for the base student cost as provided in Chapter 20 of this title. Where funds are insufficient to serve all students in a given category, the district may determine which students within the category shall be served. Provided, further, no district shall be prohibited from using local funds to serve additional students above those for whom state funds are provided.

HISTORY: 1984 Act No. 512, Part II, § 9, Division II, Subdivision A, SubPart 4, § 2, 1985 Act No. 201, Part II, § 9C, 1986 Act No. 540, Part II, § 18.